

# Learning Differences and Disabilities: What Every Learner Should Know

Funds for producing and distributing this publication were provided by the Ohio Department of Education under authority of Section 223 of the Workforce Investment Act, 1998. Opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Ohio Department of Education or the U.S. Department of Education, and no endorsement should be inferred.

## For More Information. . .

Below you will find links to websites with more information on learning disabilities:

- LDA - Learning Disabilities Association of America  
<http://www.lidamerica.org/>

- Bridges to Practice  
<http://www.nifl.gov/nifl/ld/bridges/bridges.html>

- National Center for Learning Disabilities  
<http://www.ld.org/research/index.cfm>

- LD Online  
<http://www.ldonline.org/>

- International Dyslexia Association  
<http://www.interdys.org/>

- SchwabLearning  
<http://www.schwablearning.org/index.asp>



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## Why Is It Hard for Me to Learn?

We all learn differently. Some people are visual learners who prefer to see things they are learning about. Some are auditory learners who prefer to hear the things they are learning about. Some are tactile or kinesthetic learners who need to touch or create things or move around to learn best. These different ways of learning are called learning styles. It is sometimes difficult to learn in situations that do not match our learning style.

Many adults have difficulty learning. Some struggle with academic subjects such as math or spelling. Others struggle to learn a foreign language or a new sport. Sometimes the difficulties can be significant enough to stand in the way of a person's ability to read, write, listen, speak, do math or even think.

To get approval for accommodations from the State GED Office before you take the GED test. Follow the steps below.

## Accommodations on the GED

To apply for an accommodation on the GED for a learning disability or other cognitive disability, follow these steps:

1. Call the GED Testing Center or your ABE program and ask for the Accommodation forms for Learning and Other Cognitive Disabilities. They are blue.
2. Complete Section 1 of the form.
3. Have the professional who did your diagnosis complete all parts of Section 3. Make sure the Professional Diagnostician signs where requested.
4. If an advocate is transferring information from a report to the form, a copy of the actual diagnostic report must be attached.
5. Send the forms to the GED examiner for signature. The examiner will either return the form to you or will send the form directly to the State GED Office. If the form is returned to you, check to make sure everything has been filled out completely, then send them on to the State GED Office at:

**State GED Office**  
25 S. Front St. Mail Stop 106  
Columbus, OH 43215  
Phone: 614-466-1577  
Email: [ged@ode.state.oh.us](mailto:ged@ode.state.oh.us)

# Applying for an Accommodation on the GED

If you have a diagnosed learning disability (or other diagnosed disability), you may be able to get accommodations on the GED test. There are accommodations available on the GED test for people with:

- **Learning and Other Cognitive Disabilities**

Examples of conditions: dyslexia, dyscalculia, receptive aphasia, written language disorder.

- **Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder**

Examples of conditions: attention deficit disorder, hyperactivity, impulsivity.

- **Emotional/Mental Health**

Examples of conditions: schizophrenia, depression, bipolar disorder.

- **Physical/Chronic Health Disability**

Examples of conditions: blindness, low vision, deaf, hard of hearing, HIV, diabetes, mobility impaired.

You must get approval for accommodations from the State GED Office before you take the GED test. Some of the accommodations that are available on the GED are:

- Extended time
- Audiocassette
- Private room
- Talking calculator
- Scribe

There are accommodations available on the GED test for students who do not have a formal diagnosis. Some of these accommodations are:

- Large print
- Colored overlays
- Seating near natural light
- Use of a manipulative for concentration or nerve steadying
- Ear plugs
- Seat cushion
- Taking the individual test sections on different days

These are some examples of areas that people may struggle with:

**Reading:**

Sounding out words  
Understanding what you read  
Reading out loud

**Writing**

Spelling  
Writing clearly  
Handwriting

**Listening**

Remembering what is said  
Understanding what is being said  
Hearing slight differences in words

**Speaking**

Understanding word meanings  
Remembering grammar rules  
Organizing what you say

**Math**

Remembering math facts  
Solving multi-step problems  
Doing simple math in your head

**Reasoning and Thinking**

Linking related ideas  
Thinking through decisions  
Deciding upon a learning strategy

# A Learning Disability Is Not Caused By...

- Visual or hearing problems
- Mental retardation
- Physical disabilities
- Economic disadvantages
- Cultural differences
- Emotional problems
- Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADD or ADHD)

All of these things can make learning difficult, but they are not learning disabilities.

## What Is A Learning Disability?

All education programs that receive federal funds, which include all public schools, must adhere to this law. ABE students who have not obtained a high school diploma and who are under the age of 22 are protected under IDEA. This means they are entitled to services related to identification and accommodation of learning disabilities at the expense of the public school district within which they live.

### Rehabilitation Act of 1973 - Section 504

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 says that schools and colleges that get money from the federal government cannot discriminate against a person because of a disability. This law also says that accommodations or changes must be made to help students with learning disabilities. Accommodations are meant to let students with disabilities take part in educational programs just as people without disabilities would. Some examples of accommodations are: having more time to finish a test, listening to a test on tape or using a notetaker.

### Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities. It also says that employers, as well as educational agencies, need to provide reasonable accommodations to individuals with disabilities. Educational programs must offer accommodations that will give individuals with learning disabilities an equal opportunity to participate in the program. Accommodations should be offered by employers as long as important parts of the job are not changed by the accommodation. The worker, however, must be qualified to do the job.

#### Example:

Peter is 20 years old and does not have a high school diploma. He has recently entered an ABE program. His math skills are very strong but he struggles with reading. The teachers gave him a screening for a learning disability and it indicates that one could exist. He wants to get evaluated by a psychologist to find out if he has a learning disability, but cannot afford the cost. Under the IDEA, his home school district must provide the evaluation at no cost to Peter.

#### Example:

Dan has a diagnosed learning disability. He is entitled to extended time on tests and allowed to take all tests in a private room. His teachers must honor these accommodations during any testing that happens in the classroom.

#### Example: From U.S EEOC

Eliana has dysgraphia, a learning disability that affects her ability to write. Her GED class is working on essay writing. While the rest of the class may handwrite their essays, the teacher should offer Eliana the opportunity to type her essay on the computer in a word processing program.

# What Are My Rights?

People with learning disabilities should know about the laws that may help them. There are three laws that protect the rights of people with disabilities. These laws are:

- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 - Section 504
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

These laws prohibit discrimination against people with disabilities. They also require employers to provide accommodations to people with documented disabilities. You are protected by these laws if you have a documented disability. You also must inform the appropriate people about your disability to be covered by these laws. In other words, you must “disclose” your disability to be protected by these laws.

## Laws Protecting Individuals with Disabilities

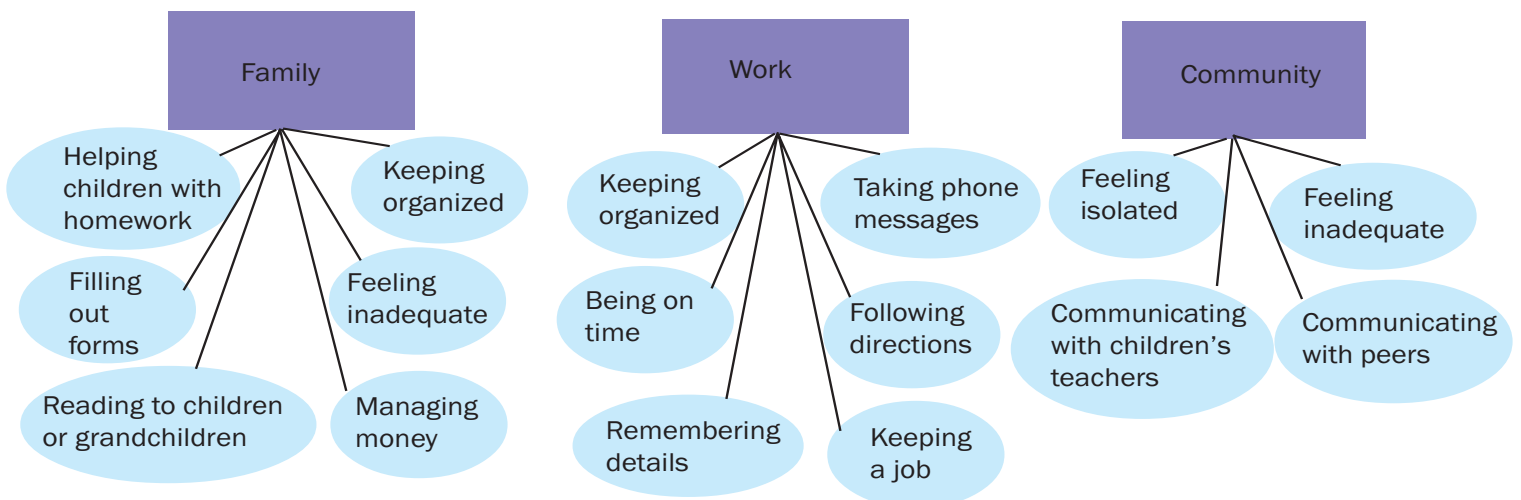
### The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is an education law that applies to young people with disabilities from birth through 21 years of age who require special education services. The sections pertaining to school-age students also apply to young adults under the age of 22 who have not obtained a regular high school diploma.

#### Example:

Kylie is in third grade and is reading below grade level. Her mother suspects Kylie may have a learning disability. Reading disabilities run in her family. Kylie's mother has the right to ask her school district to conduct an evaluation on Kylie at no cost to the family.

The brain of a person with a learning disability works differently. It receives, stores, and sends information differently. It is not known exactly why this happens. Learning disabilities can be passed down through generations of families. A learning disability is something a person is born with. It will not go away. But people do learn ways to cope with their learning disability. How does having a learning disability affect your life? It not only affects what happens in the classroom, it can impact your life as a family member, community member, and worker.



## What Does a Diagnosis for LD Involve?

A diagnosis of a learning disability must be done by a licensed professional. The professional will test reading, writing, spelling, speaking, listening and math skills. The professional will also ask questions about health, family history and educational experiences. Even if a person exhibits some of the common characteristics of having a learning disability, we cannot assume he or she has a learning disability. A learning disability must be diagnosed by a professional.

## Who Should Do a Diagnosis?

A diagnosis of a learning disability is conducted by a qualified professional such as a licensed psychologist or a licensed educational diagnostician. Choose someone who:

- has experience diagnosing adults with learning disabilities.
- knows about the various types of learning disabilities.
- knows how to measure skills in individuals who struggle with written tests.
- conducts a comprehensive evaluation and does not rely on test scores alone.

## How Can I Find a Qualified Professional?

You can find a directory of psychologists who may be willing to provide services to ABLE students at low-cost or on a sliding scale at the Central/Southeast ABLE Resource Center website at <http://www.able-ohiou.org>. Click on Psychologist Network and find your county. Also, your local ABLE program may be able to help you find a qualified professional who provides diagnostic services.

## How Much Does a Diagnosis Cost?

A diagnosis can cost several hundred dollars, but there are ways that some or all of the costs may be covered:

- Private insurance may cover LD diagnosis.
- Your local ABLE program may be able to refer you to a professional who can do LD diagnosis for reduced cost.
- Rehabilitation Services helps people with disabilities find and keep employment. They may offer diagnostic services.
- Some programs may offer special grants or financial assistance to help with the cost of diagnosis.
- Some universities offer diagnostic services in their psychology clinic at a reduced cost.